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HOLOCAUST MUSEUM HOUSTON

INTERVIEW WITH HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR

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Q. Good afternoon. It's May 16, 1995. My name is L S . I represent the Holocaust Museum Houston. Today we are going to interview Mr. M H Mr. H has an interesting story to tell us. He is one of the few people that I've interviewed that had remained in Europe after the Holocaust, and after the war, and came fairly late to the United States. Mr. H , tell us when you were born and where you were born, please.

A. I was born in 1921, on January 2nd, in Czepel, which is on the outskirts of Budapest. I was going to school there. I lived there, and later on I moved to the city of Budapest which one is close to the center. During the early days, my childhood, I was going to school in Czepel, I tried to go after the high school, go to a higher education, but at that time it was not allowed to Jews to get a higher education. One of my other brothers finished the college because he was born in 1912, and so what I could do was go to either vocational school or some other school, and take a job, and I was able to work a few years in dry good stores, and then in 1942, I was drafted, or I had to go to like military service. But at that time, that service was slave labor camp for Jews.

Q. Mr. H , I'm going to take you back a little bit into the early years. You were born in 1921. Tell us about your family. Were they religious, what did they speak at home, did they go to shul?

A. Well, my father had a grocery store in Czepel. He was a very religious man. As a matter of fact, he closed on Saturdays, and his was one of the downfalls of the store closure, because all around us the Gentile store owners told the customer why do you go and buy from that Jew over there, why don't you come from us. Because in the probably

about 3-4 square blocks, we had three other Gentile stores, and so our business went way down, and my father was forced to close the door, because was no more business.

Q. Was this your first experience with anti-Semitism in Hungary?

A. Yes, basically, it was because you know, I was pretty young and I couldn't understand why all that thing going on, and my father was explain to me that these people are just build up hatreds, and the anti-Semitism in Hungary, it was always high, because it's mainly a Catholic country and they always blame the Jews, what's happened with Christ. So then going through all that thing, we couldn't do nothing else but try to live. We had a few Gentile friends. You know, they're just like anywhere else. Some of them even were bragging of "My best friend is a Jew", but you know how that goes. And it's – we couldn't do anything. This was a very small community which didn't have too many Jewish families. We had a small synagogue, and my father went to the shul every Friday night and Saturday and on the High Holidays, all our boys dressed up and we went there. My father asked me where I was why don't you stay here, and like young boys, they don't want to sit in the shul you know. But we were brought up in a very nice Jewish home, very good Jewish education and tried to be true Jew to maintain our lives.

Q. How many Jews were in this town?

A. Probably not more than five hundred.

Q. And how far were you from Budapest?

A. It's about ten miles, maybe less. It is just the outskirts, because later on they put that community as a section of Budapest, later on. So it was Budapest.

Q. So you lived a very comfortable, so to speak, Jewish life when you were growing up.